

Sanitized - Approved For Release : C

Czech Who Defected Leaves U. S. by Air

By PETER RHISS

A Czechoslovak physician who announced his defection from the Communist country and sought asylum here three weeks ago has left New York on his way back to Czechoslovakia. The International Rescue Committee said yesterday the circumstances of his departure were "unclear."

The physician, Dr. Jaroslav Krmel, telephoned the committee's resettlement director, Charles Sternberg, last Tuesday morning. He said he was at the Czechoslovak mission to the United Nations and had decided to return to Czechoslovakia.

That night, Dr. Krmel boarded an Air France plane for Paris and Prague at Idlewild Airport. Idlewild sources said

yesterday that he had been accompanied to the airport by three men who said they were from the Czechoslovak United Nations mission. Two went with him to the plane although they did not go aboard.

Efforts to reach Ambassador Jiri Hajek, head of the permanent Czechoslovak mission to the United Nations, were unavailing yesterday.

However, one Czechoslovak aide said Dr. Krmel had applied to return through the Czechoslovak embassy in Washington. The aide said that "the picture he had in mind about the way of life here" had turned out differently.

The Idlewild sources said Dr. Krmel carried what was called "a paper passport issued in Washington a few days before."

As late as Monday morning, however, he was scheduled to be interviewed for a job here with a professional medical group arranged for him by the International Rescue Committee.

A depressed, distressed

Dr. Krmel, who is 37 years old, had been chief anesthesiologist at the Vitkovice Iron Works Hospital in Ostrava before his trip here with a physicians' tour group. On Sept. 18, when he announced his defection, he said he did so because "spiritual torrg reaches into all areas of public and private life" in Czechoslovakia.

Friends reported that he had been to a party here Saturday night. On Sunday, they said he appeared somewhat depressed at being away from his wife and 2-year-old daughter, whom he



The New York Times

RETURN TO HOME:

Dr. Jaroslav Krmel, Czech physician who sought asylum in U.S. three weeks ago.

had left behind when he came here.

These items questioned when Dr. Krmel could ever have been in touch with Czechoslovak diplomats in Washington.

They said he was in New York Sept. 12 and 20, being interviewed by immigration authorities, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Central Intelligence Agency.

A Mrs. [redacted] Island that weekend, they said, and on Monday, Sept. 23, he was "whisked away" to Washington. There, they asserted, he was in a C. I. A. headquarters in virtual custody until Thursday, Oct. 3, when he was driven back to New York by C. I. A. members, arriving here the next day.

He had been supported while here by the rescue committee, which is at 160 Park Avenue South, at 21st Street. He was taken there Sept. 18 by a New Yorker of Czechoslovak origin. [redacted] had approached with [redacted] proposal to defect.

Case Was Under Study

Sol Marks, deputy director of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, said yesterday that Dr. Krmel had come to the agency's office at 20 West Broadway Sept. 19 and declared his intention to defect. He filled out and signed that same day a form to adjust his status to that of a permanent resident.

An investigation was started and was still under way. Mr. Marks said, looking to a hearing and decision. The lapse of time in the case was not unusual, Mr. Marks said.

Mr. Sternberg said the [redacted] concern over [redacted] from Dr. Krmel. He suggested that Gov-

ernment authorities make a check.

Mr. Marks said that ordinarily there was no Federal check

except in cases such as those of wanted criminals, when airlines and steamships are notified to prevent their leaving. There was no immigration check at New York when he appeared at the Air France departure.

Idlewild sources said Dr. Krmel had had a New York-Milan-Prague ticket on Airtail Airlines. He changed this for an Air France ticket from New York to Paris and Prague on Flight 700, leaving at 7 P.M.

They said the three men with him had commented that Dr. Krmel had been a member of a doctors' group that came here and had first defected. But they said that one day he had walked into the Czechoslovak United

Nations mission and turned himself in.

Leb Cherne, chairman of the International Rescue Committee, said in a statement last night:

"Dr. Jaroslav Krmel came to our office on Sept. 18, 1963, asking for assistance in being permitted to stay in the United States. Since we had no reason to assume that his defection was not genuine, we helped him in submitting the requisite application to the Immigration and Naturalization Service."

"We were in the process of getting him placed professionally when he disappeared from his hotel room on Monday, Oct. 7. On Tuesday, Oct. 8, he called and informed us that he had decided to return to Czechoslovakia and that this was his own decision."

"To the question whether he was calling from the Czechoslovak mission to the United

Nations, he answered affirmatively. On the undoubtedly correct assumption that the call was being monitored, no further questions were asked of Dr. Krmel. The call was reported immediately to United States Governmental authorities.

"Without having reached any conclusion as to the happenings of Monday, Oct. 7, I.N.C. expressed its concern about the necessity that Dr. Krmel be interviewed by representatives of our Government."

"Today we learned that Dr. Krmel had left New York Tuesday evening by Air France. We hope that this decision was voluntary, but the circumstances surrounding it are unclear."

Imm. Urged

"We hope that the United States Government will act in a [redacted] manner in the case of Dr. Krmel had left of his own

FOIAb3b

FOIAb3b

CPYRGHT

free will," the statement continued. "It is obviously of paramount importance that refugees asking for asylum at our shores be protected. While their freedom of choice must not be infringed upon, it must be established as a fact rather than a conjecture."

The fact that, when he asked for asylum in September, Dr. Krmel was permitted to stay in this country, speaks for the peace of our society. But equally frequent—and the point will not be missed by the 97,000,000 citizens of the East European captive nations—is the freedom Dr. Krmel had to change his mind.

This freedom to move in and out of the free world—and even to reject it later on—stands in stark and dramatic contrast to the almost insuperable barriers placed by the Communist world in the way of their own citizens, thousands of whom have died in trying to escape.

"Only today, virtually buried on Page 43 of The New York Times, is a five-line report from Austria, recording the escape of a 22-year-old Hungarian boy who was seriously injured by a mine explosion as he crawled through barbed-wire barriers to reach freedom."

"The case of Dr. Krmel and this young Hungarian, more than anything else, reveal the fundamental differences between the two systems."

Sanitized

FOIAb3b

FOIAb3b

FOIAb3b

FOIAb3b